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ABSTRACT

Information obtained from the 1973 Davis Student Survey regarding the experience of graduate/professional students at the University of California at Davis is presented. Two types of information are provided. The first covers general issues pertaining to the expected outcomes of a college education, and includes sections devoted to the desired outcomes of college, reasons for choosing UC Davis, and vocational expectations after college. The second type of information pertains to student evaluations of the campus environment at Davis including areas of needed assistance, serious problems on campus, and major sources of student satisfaction. (Author/SPG)

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GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

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FOREWORD

This is the second of three reports about the perceptions of Davis students based on information obtained by the 1973 Davis Student Survey. Both this report and its companion, Undergraduate Student Perceptions, are intended to provide a general overview of student life at Davis. A third report, The Academic Environment, focuses more directly on student perceptions relating to the academic side of campus life.

I wish to again acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by Norman Lynn Bailiff and Bob Nixon Gaines. As graduate students and staff members in this office, they were chiefly responsible for the collection and analysis of data necessary to the preparation of these reports.

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INTRODUCTION

In its first year of operation, the Office for Student Affairs Research and Evaluation undertook the task of assessing student needs and evaluating student service programs. The primary vehicle for this assignment was a large mailed survey which was known as the 1973 Davis Student Survey. Sent to a 25 percent randomly selected sample of the student population, this instrument provided a wealth of information about the Davis student.

The purpose of this report is to present a select portion of the available Survey data. The subject is the graduate/professional student. An attempt has been made to identify some of the critically important elements which provide an overview of the graduate student's Davis experience. The information chosen for this report consists of two distinct types. The first covers general issues pertaining to the selection of a college and the expected outcomes of a college education. Sections in this part of the report are devoted to the desired outcomes of college, reasons for choosing UC Davis, and vocational expectations after college. The other type of information included in this report pertains to student evaluations of the campus environment at Davis. Attention is focused on areas of needed assistance, serious problems on the campus, and major sources of student satisfaction.

The information presented in this report is intended to provide a descriptive portrayal of the graduate and professional student at Davis. In a number of cases, comparisons are made between the responses of graduate students (those pursuing traditional academic degrees) and professional students (those seeking professional degrees in Law, Medicine, or Veterinary Medicine). Throughout the entire report, comparisons are also made with the responses of UCD undergraduates presented in the companion report, Undergraduate Student Perceptions.

As a final explanatory note, when references are made to the total sample of graduate and professional students in the report, a shorthand designation "grad/prof" is used.

METHODOLOGY

The 1973 Davis Student Survey was developed by a team of student interns during the 1972-73 academic year. Employed by the Office for Student Affairs Research and Evaluation, they worked closely with a consultant from Educational Testing Service, Richard E. Peterson, in devising and administering the instrument. The Survey consisted of four distinct forms, each eight pages in length. The four forms were comparable in appearance and format; all the questions were multiple choice, with spaces provided for additional written comments. With the exception of the cover sheet, the demographic questions (p. 2 of each form), and the questions on peer advising and counseling programs (pp. 6 and 7), however, each form contained unique items.

In order to obtain a maximum amount of data at a minimum of inconvenience to the students being sampled, a matrix sampling procedure for distributing the Survey was employed. In the third week of May, each form was mailed to a different computer-selected random sampling of 1,000 students from the total student population. For the purposes of the Survey, the population was defined as every student who had registered for the spring quarter, prior to the first day of instruction. This sampling included individuals enrolled in the three undergraduate colleges, the graduate and professional schools, and the Division of Extended Learning. One week after the surveys were sent out, the students in the sample were sent postcards reminding them to return the completed questionnaire.

A total of 1,875 questionnaires were returned out of the 4,000 sent out. Three hundred and thirty-six (18 percent) were received from grad/prof students. A comparison of this return rate with the expected rate of 27 percent --

their percent in the total campus population -- points out the significant degree to which grad/prof students are under-represented in the total campus return. Of those who did return completed questionnaires, medical students were considerably under-represented while graduate students were over-represented. As a result, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting these findings and all conclusions should be viewed as being tentative, awaiting additional corroboration.

BACKGROUND DESCRIPTION OF THE UCD GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL STUDENT

One out of every four students on the Davis campus of the University of California is enrolled in an advanced degree program. According to enrollment data for the fall quarter of 1973, 36 percent of the 4,165 students were engaged in professioral degree programs in the schools of Law, Medicine, or Veterinary Medicine, with the other 64 percent pursuing academic degrees in the Graduate Division.

The School of Medicine had the largest professional school enrollment (637 students), 46 percent of whom were considered interns or residents. Of the 383 individuals in the School of Veterinary Medicine, 6 percent were classified as interns or residents. As for the School of Law, 499 were registered for classes in the fall 1973.

The largest share of grad/prof students (2,606) were seeking academic degrees, as contrasted with professional degrees. (For the purposes of this report, those students working for teaching credentials, more properly considered a form of professional degree, are included as graduate students rather than professional students.) These students were seeking degrees in approximately 65 different majors. Some programs in the Graduate Division are organized within academic departments while other programs, known as graduate groups, are directed by faculty whose membership is determined by research interest

rather than by department affiliation. Most graduate groups have been organized in the agricultural or natural sciences; however, the group model is currently being extended into other fields of study.

Engineering, which is more technically a college than a department, enrolled the largest number of students (329) in any graduate major. Ecology (145) and Physiology (102) had the largest graduate groups, while English (85) and History (69) were the two departments with the largest number of students. A further distinction in academic programs is made between majors in Health Sciences and majors in general program areas. Nine percent of those seeking graduate degrees were specializing in health related study. For example, 74 percent of students in Physiology were considered Health Science graduate students; they were working on academic degrees, as opposed to professional degrees, but with a health science emphasis.

One final note worth mentioning about the general background of UCD grad/prof students is the breakdown of the population by sex. Women made up only 25 percent of fall 1973 enrollment in all grad/prof programs. However, 34 percent of all new students were women, a figure reflecting an increase of 2 percent from the previous year.

A DAVIS EDUCATION

Davis' history as a graduate institution is relatively short. The School of Veterinary Medicine was established in 1946, while the Schools of Law (1966) and Medicine (1968) were created more recently. Graduate studies began in the mid-1920's and graduate programs evolved as the campus grew, but it wasn't until 1961 that a separate academic unit, the Graduate Division, was established.

Information about students who enroll in the graduate or professional programs at Davis has been largely inaccessible. To partially close this gap,

the first part of this report focuses closely on the grad/prof student's reasons for coming to Davis, the outcomes of graduate education deemed most desirable, and vocational expectations at the completion of graduate study.

Reasons for the Selection of UC Davis

A sample of grad/prof respondents were asked in the Survey to select their three most important reasons for choosing the Davis campus. Table 1 presents a compilation of these reasons.

TABLE 1

Graduate/Professional Reasons for Choosing
UC Davis, Spring 1973
(in percent)

Reason	Grad (N=51)	Prof (N=27)	Total (N=78)
Special strength in intended major	49	48	46
General campus atmosphere	35	44	38
Get a good education there	35	30	36
Good academic reputation	37	30	33
Would be intellectually challenging	24	7	18
Offered financial support	20	4	16
Close to home	10	15	12
Friends were coming here	8	4	6
Far from home	4	4	5
Parents expected me to	2	0	2

Table 1 clearly reveals that grad/prof students choose Davis primarily because of the strength of the program in their academic major -- a reason selected by almost half (46 percent) the respondents. General campus atmosphere, the overwhelming choice of most undergraduates, was of secondary importance, selected by 38 percent of the grad/prof students. It is interesting to note, among the remaining reasons, the differences between graduate and professional students on "intellectually challenging" and "offered financial support." In both instances, greater percentages of graduate students selected these as reasons for choosing Davis than professional students.

Desired Outcomes of a Graduate Education

The commonly held assumption that students choose graduate programs primarily because of their academic credibility was supported in the preceding section. This next part of the report attempts to validate two additional assumptions about grad/prof students, namely: that graduate students desire intellectual development in college, while professional students, especially those in Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, seek specific skills to use in their anticipated occupations. To test these assumptions, a sample of the respondents to the Survey were asked to rate the importance of a series of possible college outcomes. A ranking of outcomes on the basis of their being "of great importance" reveals several insights into the question of what these students want out of college.

The responses of the graduate students, when compared to those of the professional students, reveal some predictable differences. The sampled graduate students, like the undergraduates, placed high emphasis on personal-intellectual development. Eighty-two percent thought that "to improve your ability to think and reason" was an outcome of great importance. A slightly smaller percentage (78 percent) felt similarly about "to broaden your intellectual interests." By contrast, the third choice of graduate students, "the learning of specific skills useful in an occupation," was the first choice of the professional students. Two-thirds of the graduates subscribed to the improtance of this item, whereas 85 percent of the professional students thought it an outcome of great importance. A distant second choice for professional students was the imporvement in ability to think and reason (70 percent).

Vocational Expectations

The Survey included a number of questions designed to gather information about the students' vocational plans following completion of their schooling. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of both graduate students (75 percent)

and professional students (88 percent) planned on being employed immediately after graduation in the field of their academic major. Their degree of certainty about finding a job in their chosen field reflects some distinctions within the present job market. While professional students were overwhelmingly confident (81 percent felt they would "definitely" get a job), graduate students were less sure (36 percent were definite). A final question of whether or not they would find a job enabling them to have the life style they would like further points out the graduate-professional distinction. Seventy-three percent of the professional students said "definitely yes" while only 16 percent of the graduate students responded in a like manner. Most graduate students (71 percent) indicated that they "probably" would find this kind of a position. If nothing else, this data indicates, on an admittedly general level, that grad/prof students are fairly realistic about the present conditions in the "market place."

PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAMPUS

The students coming to Davis for advanced study are older and more experienced than the bulk of their undergraduate counterparts. As a result they undoubtedly look upon the surrounding campus environment from a distinctly different point of view. The following section presents three kinds of perceptual material gathered from the Davis Student Survey which brings these distinctions into clearer perspective. These materials include information on individual student needs, serious campus problems, and sources of satisfaction.

Student Needs and Accessibility of Assistance

A substantial portion of the Survey was directed toward identifying the perceived needs of Davis students. A list of college student concerns was provided, and students were asked to indicate whether or not they had needed assistance with each concern during the past academic year. Furthermore, students were asked if appropriate assistance was accessible on campus for each concern.

Table 2 contains a specific list of these concerns, the percentage of students needing help with each concern, and the perceived accessibility of such assistance. The concerns, for the sake of clarity, have been grouped into four areas: Academic, Vocational, Personal-Social, and Maintenance.

TABLE 2

Percentage of Students Needing Assistance and Perceived Accessibility of Assistance with College Student Concerns, Spring 1973

	Needed Help	Accessibility of Help*
ACADEMIC		
Planning an academic major	33	High
Clarifying educational goals	27	Moderate
Learning how to make good use of the libraries	20	High
Help with classes (tutoring)	7	High
Selecting an academic major	6	High
Improving study/reading skills	5	Moderate
VOCATIONAL		
Finding a part-time/summer job in area of anticip. career	36	Moderate
Finding a job after graduation	35	High
Information on grad/prof schools' admission standards	19	High
Information on applying to grad or prof schools	12	High
PERSONAL-SOCIAL		
Health care	77	High
Draft and veterans	14	High
Developing interpersonal awareness/sensitivity	13	Moderate
Birth control	12	High
Marriage or relationship problems	12	Moderate
Legal	11	Moderate
Finding identity as a person	11	Moderate
Personal crisis	9	Moderate
Childbirth	8	High
Roommate hassles	6	Low
Religious or ethical guidance	5	Moderate
Venereal disease	5	High
Sexuality	3	Moderate
Abortion	3	High
Sterilization	2	Moderate
Drugs	1	High

*High = 100% - 75%; Moderate = 74% - 50%; Low = less than 50%

TABLE 2 (cont.)

	Needed Help	Accessibility of Help*
MAINTENANCE		
Short term financial assistance -- loans	42	High
Obtaining financial credit	28	Moderate
Finding suitable housing	24	High
Learning how to repair your car	24	Low
Finding a part-time job to earn additional money	19	High
Consumer information on local merchants	17	Low
Child care	12	Low
Information on minor home repair	9	Low
Planning good, nutritious meals	7	Low
Budgeting and managing money	6	Low

*High = 100% - 75%; Moderate = 74% - 50%; Low = less than 50%

Table 2 enumerates those concerns which are most prevalent in the minds of Davis grad/prof students. The need for health care was expressed by the greatest percentage of grad/prof students (77 percent), as it was for Davis undergraduates. However, unlike the undergraduates who had three additional needs which affected at least half the sample, health care was the only need clearly indicated by a majority of grad/prof students.

While their needs may not be as pervasive as the needs of undergraduates, an examination of needs indicated by at least 30 percent reveals four concerns affecting a substantial minority of grad/prof students. Most prevalent in this general grouping was the need for short-term financial assistance, desired by 42 percent of the respondents. In addition, the need for finding a job either on a part-time basis in their career area (36 percent) or on a full time basis after graduation (35 percent) was reported. Finally, one-third of the sample indicated they needed assistance in planning their academic major.

In contrast to the undergraduates whose major concerns seemed to be more directly related to present and future academic concerns, the grad/prof students expressed primary concern for vocational and personal maintenance matters. Grad/prof students also demonstrated better control over their personal-social life than undergraduates, based on a comparison of responses in

this area. Of the four areas, it seems to be the practical concerns of jobs and finances which are paramount in the minds of grad/prof students.

The accessibility of assistance as perceived by Davis grad/prof students was measured on a scale that arbitrarily defined less than 50 percent as low, 50 to 74 percent as moderate, and 75 percent and above as high. Students reported low accessibility in few areas. Those that were noted, such as learning how to repair a car, are areas in which University involvement is marginal. In general, services intended to meet primary student needs were perceived as readily accessible among grad/prof students as they were among undergraduate respondents.

Serious Problems with the Davis Environment

While the preceding section of this report focused on individual student concerns, this portion presents a closer look at campus-wide problems as perceived by Davis grad/prof students. From a listing of twenty-one possibilities, students were asked to indicate which problems were serious, which were minor, and which were of no consequence. Table 3 contains a ranking of problems based on the percentages of students who perceived each problem as serious.

TABLE 3

Graduate/Professional Student Perceptions of Serious Campus Problems, Spring 1973 (in percent)

1.	Cost of housing	57
2.	Adequacy of campus parking for students' cars	37
3.	Dogs running loose on campus	37
4.	Financial poverty among students	37
5.	Competition in classes	30
6.	Transportation from Davis to other areas	28
7.	Instructors who are more interested in research than in teaching	27
8.	Cigarette smoking in class	24
9.	Thefts and burglaries in Davis	22
10.	Child care	21
11.	Getting to know people of the opposite sex	20

TABLE 3 (cont.)

12.	Getting information about specific classes	19
13.	Bicycle/pedestrian safety on campus	18
14.	Getting to know instructors personally	17
15.	Getting help in making career decisions	16
16.	Amount of outside lighting on campus	14
17.	Making new friends	13
18.	Cheating on examinations	13
19.	Quality of classes taught by T.A.'s	9
20.	Rapes and assaults on students	8
21.	Relations among racial or ethnic groups	8

The four most serious campus problems noted by grad/prof students relate directly to the area of maintenance. Housing costs (57 percent) was far and away the most serious of these problems. In addition, there were problems with campus parking (37 percent), dogs running loose on campus (37 percent), and financial poverty among students (37 percent).

In sharp contrast to the most serious problems of undergraduates, academic matters were a relatively minor concern to most grad/prof students. Academic competition, the overwhelming first choice of undergraduates, was thought serious by only half as many grad/prof students (30 percent). Cheating on examinations, ranked eighteenth in the list of problems, was noted by only 13 percent of the respondents.

As Table 3 reveals, academic concerns among grad/prof students are much lower than they are for undergraduates. One is tempted to conclude that once a student has achieved graduate status, serious academic problems become secondary to the more practical concerns of housing, finances and transportation.

Sources of Satisfaction

The maintenance of quality in a learning environment requires an awareness and understanding of the positive factors as well as the negative. The preceding two sections have carefully enumerated grad/prof student concerns and campus problems. The focus of this final section is on an elaboration of those positive elements of the Davis community which students find most satisfying.

In a portion of the Survey, student respondents were asked to indicate their satisfactions with a number of aspects of University life. A four point Likert scale was employed, with choices ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied." Percentages in Table 6 represent a combination of the "very satisfied" and "fairly satisfied" responses."

TABLE 4

Graduate/Professional Student Satisfactions with Various Aspects of Campus Life, Spring 1973
(in percent)

1.	Opportunity for independent study	87
2.	Freedom in choosing classes	86
3.	Opportunity to participate in sports and recreational activities	86
4.	Health care available	84
5.	Parks and recreational facilities in Davis	84
6.	Contact with faculty members	84
7.	Availability of good places to study	82
8.	Availability of tutoring	82
9.	Size of classes	81
10.	General atmosphere of the campus	78
11.	Opportunity to express opinion on campus and social issues	78
12.	Opportunity to learn crafts and hobbies	77
13.	Opportunity for variety of entertainment (lectures, movies, concerts)	76
14.	Opportunity to develop friendships	71
15.	Social life	67

TABLE 4 (cont.)

16.	Opportunity for practical application of what is learned in class	67
17.	Contacts with deans and administrators	65
18.	Advising in major departments	62
19.	Contact with non-student residents of Davis	62
20.	Career counseling in field	62
21.	Opportunity to participate in campus decision-making	56
22.	Student government	26

The data presented in Table 4 indicate the high degree of satisfaction that grad/prof students receive from their academic involvement. Six of the nine sources deemed satisfying to at least 80 percent of the sampled students are academically related. These include the opportunity for independent study (87 percent), freedom in choosing classes (86 percent), contact with faculty (83 percent), as well as the availability of places to study (82 percent) and tutoring (82 percent).

Satisfaction with the environment, particularly with the opportunity for recreational participation (86 percent) and with Davis parks and recreational activities (86 percent), was high although not to the degree that it was with undergraduates. In general, grad/prof students seem to be much more satisfied with various aspects of the campus than the undergraduates. Their only major dissatisfaction seemed to be with student government.

CONCLUSION

The description of the Davis graduate/professional student contained in the preceding pages is admittedly sketchy and incomplete; a number of additional questions need to be answered. But when viewed cautiously as an outline of some major points of interest, the report can prove to be of considerable value. At the very least, it brings to the attention of the campus

community some of the ways in which grad/prof students differ from their more numerous undergraduate counterparts.

One of the most intriguing contrasts is offered by a comparison between each group's perception of the academic and the non-academic environments. An interesting reversal is apparent in the way in which these two aspects of the campus serve as sources of satisfaction and sources of concern. The academic environment is the grad/prof student's primary source of satisfaction, while it serves as the undergraduate's major source of concern. Likewise, the non-academic environment provides the Davis undergraduates with their major satisfactions while, at the same time, the practical concerns of living in the community cause the greatest distress to the graduate/professional students.

OTHER RESEARCH AND EVALUATION RESEARCH REPORTS

Research Report #1: The Native American Experience

Research Report #2: The Planned Educational Leave Program

Research Report #3: Undergraduate Student Perceptions